
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL POETRY

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Chosen by

H. G. RAWLINSON, C.I.E.

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TO

IVOR RAWLINSON

China and Ind, Hellas and France,
Each hath its own inheritance,
And each to Truth's rich market brings
Its own divine imaginings.

ROBERT BRIDGES.

INTRODUCTION

This little book is the result of many years' reading. In the course of my studies I have been long in the habit of collecting translations from the literature of ancient India which have struck me as being particularly striking or beautiful or illustrative of various phases of Indian thought. I endeavoured, in the words of the poet,

To gather here and there,
From each fair plant, the blossom choicest grown,
To wreathe a crown, not only for the King,
But in due course for every Mussalman,
Brahmin and Buddhist, Christian and Parsee,
Through all the warring world of Hindustan.

I have now arranged them, as far as possible, in historical order, and I hope that, apart from their literary interest, they may throw some light on the development of Indian culture. They are, of course, intended for those who have no knowledge of Oriental languages, and the selections are in many instances paraphrases rather than literal renderings; in the case of Sanskrit especially, the idiom is so different that a word-for-word translation is almost incomprehensible. "Its poetry," says a writer in the *Saturday Review*, "is what makes the ancient world near of kin to us, and it is that by which we feel that the men of old are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. The poetry of a race is what redeems it from perishing as a race, and immortalizes, not only the individual poet, but the men who first loved song and were gladdened by it. This is what binds together the hearts of the ancient and modern world." It has always been the aim of the Royal India Society to bridge the gap between

East and West, by introducing European audiences to the grand and venerable culture of ancient India, with its priceless treasures of art, music and literature, and if this work can, even to a minute degree, assist in the undertaking, it will more than reward the compiler.

I would like to add one word. India is not a museum piece, and, like China, she has a flourishing literature, full of promise for the future. But modern Indian poetry requires a volume to itself, and an admirable anthology has been recently issued in the Wisdom of the East series, to which all lovers of India are so deeply indebted.

H. G. Rawlinson.

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I

HYMN TO DAWN

NOW Heaven's Daughter has appeared before us,
A maiden shining in resplendent garments.
Thou sovran lady of all earthly treasure,
Auspicious Dawn, shine here to-day upon us.

In the sky's framework she has gleamed with brightness:
The goddess has cast off the robe of darkness.
Rousing the world from sleep, with ruddy horses,
Dawn in her well-yoked chariot is arriving.

Bringing upon it many bounteous blessings,
Brightly she shines and spreads her brilliant lustre.
Last of innumerable morns departed,
First of bright morns to come has Dawn arisen.

Again and again newly born though ancient,
Decking her beauty with the self-same colours,
The goddess wastes away the life of mortals,
Like wealth diminished by the skilful player.

Gone are the mortals who in former ages
Beheld the flushing of the earlier morning.
We living men now look upon her shining;
Those will be born who shall hereafter see her.

Rig Veda, trans. A A. Macdonell.

II

HYMN TO NIGHT

THE goddess Night arrives in all her glory,
Looking about her with her countless eyes.
She, the immortal goddess, throws her veil
Over low valley, rising ground, and hill,
But soon with bright effulgence dissipates
The darkness she produces; soon advancing
She calls her sister Morning to return,
And then each darksome shadow melts away.
Kind goddess, be propitious to thy servants
Who at thy coming straightway seek repose,
Like birds who nightly nestle in the trees.
Lo ! men and cattle, flocks and wingèd creatures,
And e'en the ravenous hawks, have gone to rest.
Drive thou away from us, O Night, the wolf;
Drive thou away the thief, and bear us safely
Across thy borders. Then do thou, O Dawn,
Like one who clears away a debt, chase off
This black, yet palpable obscurity,
Which came to fold us in its close embrace.
Receive, O Night, dark daughter of the Day,
My hymn of praise, which I present to thee,
Like some rich offering to a conqueror.

Rig Veda, trans. M. Monier Williams.

III

FUNERAL HYMN

FROM the dead hand I take the bow he wielded,
To gain for us dominion, might, and glory.
Thou there, we here, rich in heroic offspring,
Will vanquish all assaults of every foeman.

Approach the bosom of the earth, the mother,
This earth, extending far and most propitious:
Young, soft as wool to bounteous givers, may she
Preserve thee from the lap of dissolution.

Open wide, O earth, press not heavily on him,
Be easy of approach, hail him with kindly aid:
As with a robe a loving mother hideth
Her son, so shroud this man, O Earth our Mother.

Rig Veda, trans. A. A. Macdonell.

IV

CREATION HYMN

NOR aught nor Nought existed; yon bright sky
Was not, nor heaven's broad woof outstretched above.
What covered all? what sheltered? what concealed?
Was it the water's fathomless abyss?
There was not death—yet was there nought immortal,
There was no confine betwixt day and night;
The only One breathed breathless by itself,
Other than It there nothing since has been.
Darkness there was, and all at first was veiled
In gloom profound—an ocean without light—
The germ that still lay covered in the husk
Burst forth, one nature, from the fervent heat
Then first came love upon it, the new spring
Of mind—yea, poets in their hearts discerned,
Pondering, this bond between created things
And uncreated. Comes this spark from earth
Piercing and all-pervading, or from heaven?
Then seeds were sown, and mighty powers arose—
Nature below, and power and will above—
Who knows the secret? who proclaimed it here,
Whence, whence this manifold creation sprang?
The Gods themselves came later into being—
Who knows from whence this great creation sprang?
He from whom all this great creation came,
Whether His will created or was mute,
The Most High Seer that is in highest heaven,
He knows it—or perchance even He knows not.

Atharva Veda, trans. Max Muller.

V

THE OVER SOUL

THE Ātman, the Self, is never born and never dies. It is without a cause and is eternally changeless. It is beyond time, unborn, permanent and everlasting. It does not die when the body dies.

When the slayer imagines that he kills, and when the slain imagines that he dies, both are under delusion. The Spirit of the slayer does not kill: The Spirit of the slain does not die.

Concealed in the heart of being lies the Ātman, the Spirit, the Self; smaller than the smallest atom, greater than the greatest spaces. The man whose human will is peaceful, leaving sorrows behind, beholds the glory of the Ātman through the grace of the Creator.

Resting, He wanders afar; sleeping, He goes everywhere. Who else but my Self can know that God of joy and of sadness?

When the wise realises the omnipresent Spirit of glory, who rests invisible in the visible and permanent in the impermanent, then he goes beyond sorrow.

Not through much learning is the Ātman reached, not through the intellect or sacred teaching. It is reached by the chosen of Him. To His chosen the Ātman reveals His glory.

Not even through deep knowledge can the Ātman be reached, unless the evil ways are abandoned, and

there is rest in the senses, concentration of the mind and peace in one's heart.

Who knows in truth where He is? The majesty of His power carries away priests and warriors, and death itself is carried away.

Kathā Upanishad, trans. J. Mascaró.

VI

THE SLEEP ETERNAL

EVEN as a falcon or an eagle, after soaring in the sky, folds his wings for he is weary and flies down to his nest, even so the Spirit of man hastens to that place of rest where the soul has no desires and the Spirit sees no dreams.

What was seen in a dream, all the fears of waking, as being slain or oppressed, pursued by an elephant or falling into an abyss, is seen to be a delusion. But when like a king or a god the Spirit feels " I am all," then he is in the highest world. It is the world of the Spirit, where there are no desires, all evil has vanished and there is no fear.

As a man in the arms of the woman beloved feels only peace all around, even so the Soul in the embrace of the Ātman, the Spirit of vision, feels only peace all around. All desires are attained, since the Spirit that is all has been attained, no desires are there, and there is no sorrow.

There a father is a father no more, nor is a mother there a mother; the worlds are no longer worlds, nor the gods are gods any longer. There the Vedas disappear; and a thief is not a thief, nor is a slayer a slayer; the outcast is not an outcast, nor the baseborn a baseborn; the pilgrim is not a pilgrim and the hermit is not a hermit. Because the Spirit of man has crossed the lands of good and evil, and has passed beyond the sorrows of the heart.

Brihadāranyaka Upanishad, trans. J. Mascaró.

VII

BRAHMA

IF the red slayer thinks he slays,
Or if the slain thinks he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near,
Shadow and sunlight are the same.
The vanished gods to me appear,
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
With me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt;
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

Kathā Upanishad, trans. R. W. Emerson.

VIII

TWO PRAYERS

(i)

FROM the Unreal lead me to the Real,
From Darkness lead me to the Light,
From Death lead me to Immortality.

Brihadāranyaka Upanishad, I, III, 28.

(ii)

Though difference be none, I am of Thee,
Not Thou, O Lord, of me;
For of the Sea is verily the Wave,
Not of the Wave the Sea.

Sankarāchārya, trans L. D. Barnett

IX

THE FAITHFUL WIFE

RĀMA spake, and soft-eyed Sītā, ever sweet in
speech and word,
Stirred by loving woman's passion, boldly
answered thus her lord:

" Do I hear my husband rightly, are these words my
Rāma spake,
And her banished lord and husband will the wedded
wife forsake ?

Lightly I dismiss the counsel which my lord hath
lightly said,
For it ill beseems a warrior and my husband's princely
grade !

For the faithful woman follows where her wedded lord
may lead,
In the banishment of Rāma, Sītā's exile is decreed.

Sire nor son nor loving brother rules the wedded
woman's state,
With her lord she falls or rises, with her consort courts
her fate.

If the righteous son of Raghu wends to forests dark
and drear,
Sītā steps before her husband wild and thorny paths to
clear !

Like the tasted refuse water cast thy timid thoughts
aside,
Take me to the pathless jungle, bid me by my lord
abide.

Car and steed and gilded palace, vain are these to woman's life,
Dearer is her husband's shadow to the loved and loving wife !

For my mother often taught me and my father often spake,
That her home the wedded woman doth beside her husband make.

As the shadow to the substance, to her lord is faithful wife,
And she parts not from her consort till she parts with fleeting life !

Therefore bid me seek the jungle and in pathless forests roam,
Where the wild deer freely ranges and the tiger makes his home.

Happier than in father's mansions in the woods will Sītā rove,
Waste no thought on home or kindred, nestling in her husband's love !

World-renowned is Rāma's valour, fearless by her Rāma's side,
Sītā still will live and wander with a faithful woman's pride,

And the wild fruit she will gather from the fresh and fragrant wood,
And the food by Rāma tasted shall be Sītā's cherished food !

Bid me seek the sylvan greenwoods, wooded hills and plateaus high,
Limpid rills and crystal fountains as they softly ripple by,

And where in the lake of lotus snowy swans their
plumage lave,
Let me with my loving Rāma skim the cool translucent
wave !

Years will pass in happy union—happiest lot to
woman given—
Sītā seeks no throne or empire, nor the brighter joys
of heaven.

Heaven conceals not brighter mansions in its sunny
fields of pride,
Where without her lord and husband faithful Sītā
would reside !

Therefore let me seek the jungle where the jungle-
rangers rove,
Dearer than the royal palace, where I share my
husband's love,

And my heart in sweet communion shall my Rāma's
wishes share,
And my wifely toil shall lighten Rāma's load of woe
and care !"

Rāmāyana, trans. R. C. Dutt.

X

THE HERMIT'S ABODE

WHEN Rāma, valiant hero, stood
In the vast shade of Dandak wood,
His eyes on every side he bent
And saw a hermit settlement,
Where coats of bark were hung around,
And holy grass bestrewed the ground.
Bright with Brahmanic lustre glowed
That circle where the saints abode:
Like the hot sun in heaven it shone,
Too dazzling to be looked upon.
Wild creatures found a refuge where
The court, well-swept, was bright and fair,
And countless birds and roe-deer made
Their dwelling in the friendly shade.
Beneath the boughs of well-loved trees
Oft danced the gay Apsarases.
Around was many an ample shed
Wherein the holy fire was fed;
With sacred grass and skins of deer,
Ladles and sacrificial gear,
And roots and fruit, and wood to burn,
And many a brimming water-urn.
There, clad in coats of bark and hide—
Their food by roots and fruit supplied—
Dwelt many an old and reverend sire,
Bright as the sun or Lord of Fire,
All with each worldly sense subdued,
A pure and saintly multitude.

Rāmāyana, trans. R T H Griffith.

DEATH

"WHEREFORE, my King!" said Nārad, "it is vain
To mourn the dead. The elements divine,
Which enter in at birth come forth at death.
All changes, and the gods are mortal too.
But thou, lament no more thy princely son;
He hath attained that excellent abode,
Airy, invisible, which knows not time,
Nor chance, nor any change. Weep not for him;
He sits with kings and heroes who are passed
Into the everlasting happy house,
Where no wars are, nor wounds, and good men dwell.

King! this is death! this is that Mrityu!
Thus—when the hour is come—the creatures end.
Obeying the vast purposes of Him
Who maketh and unmaketh, Mrityu takes
Their breath. She slays not; of themselves they die.
The gentle Spirit with the staff in hand
Strikes none, but succours all. Therefore the wise,
Knowing that such is Brahma's will, and good,
Never lament their dead; grieve thou no more!"
And when the holy Nārada made end,
(Vyāsa said,) this King Akampana
Shed no more tears, but spake unto the Saint:
"Lo! now my woe is gone, my heart is healed!
Oh! wisest of all Rishis, I have peace;
I thank thee for the blessing of such lore;
I clasp thy feet." Therewith Nārada went
To Nandana, leaving him comforted.

" Son of the Pāndavas, be patient too !
Thy prince, thy gallant Abhimanyu,
Fell like a lord of men, and hath his meed
In Swarga with the blessed. Rise thou up,
Quit grief, and take thy weapons, and renew
The battle with thy brothers on the plain. "

Mahābhārata, trans. Edwin Arnold.

XII

JOURNEY'S END

WHEN the four brothers knew the high resolve of king Yudhishthira,
Forthwith with Draupadī they issued forth, and after them their dog
Followed: the king himself went out the seventh from the royal city,
And all the citizens and women of the palace walked behind;
But none could find it in their heart to say unto the king, " Return."
And so at length the train of citizens went back, bidding adieu.
Then the high-minded sons of Pāndu and the noble Draupadī
Roamed onwards, fasting, with their faces towards the east; their hearts
Yearning for union with the Infinite; bent on abandonment
Of worldly things. They wandered on to many countries, many a sea
And river. Yudhishthira walked in front, and next to him came Bhīma,
And Arjuna came after him, and then, in order, the twin brothers.
And last of all came Draupadī, with her dark skin and lotus-eyes—
The faithful Draupadī, loveliest of women, best of noble wives.
Behind them walked the only living thing that shared their pilgrimage—

The dog—and by degrees they reached the briny sea. There Arjuna
Cast in the waves his bow and quiver. Then with souls well disciplined
They reached the northern region, and beheld with heaven-aspiring hearts
The mighty mountain Himavat. Beyond its lofty peak they passed
Towards a sea of sand, and saw at last the rocky Meru, king
Of mountains. And so with eager steps they hastened on, their souls intent
On union with the Eternal.

Mahābhārata, trans M Monier Williams.

XIII

KRISHNA THE ALL-GOD

APART from me, brave Arjun, there
Exists no single thing;
The universe is strung on me
Like pearls upon a string.

I am the taste in water; sound
In ether; none the less
I am the mystic word that gives
All scriptures power to bless;
I am the light in moon and sun;
In man and manliness;

I am the fragrance in the earth;
I am the heat in fire;
The life in life; the energy
In men of stern desire;

I am the everlasting seed
All forms of life to save;
I am the wisdom of the wise;
The courage of the brave;

I am the strength of those too strong
For lust or passion's toll;
I am the pure, permitted love
Toward every living soul.

Bhagavad Gītā, trans. Edwin Arnold.

XIV

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF KRISHNA

THEN, O King ! the God, so saying,
Stood, to Prithâ's Son displaying
All the splendour, wonder, dread
Of his vast Almighty-head.
Out of countless eyes beholding,
Out of countless mouths commanding,
Countless mystic forms enfolding
In one Form: supremely standing,
Countless radiant glories wearing,
Countless heavenly weapons bearing,
Crowned with garlands of star-clusters,
Robed in garb of woven lustres,
Breathing from His perfect Presence
Breaths of every subtle essence
Of all heavenly odours; shedding
Blinding brilliance; overspreading—
Boundless, beautiful—all spaces
With His all-regarding faces;
So He showed ! If there should rise
Suddenly within the skies
Sunburst of a thousand suns,
Flooding earth with beams undeemed-of,
Then might be that Holy One's
Majesty and radiance dreamed of !

So did Pāndu's Son behold
All this universe enfold
All its huge diversity
Into one vast shape, and be

Visible, and viewed, and blended
In one Body—subtle, splendid,
Nameless—th' All-comprehending
God of Gods, the Never-Ending
Deity !

Bhagavad Gītā, trans. Edwin Arnold.

XV

IMMORTALITY

NEVER the spirit was born; the spirit shall
cease to be never;
Never was time it was not; End and Beginning are dreams!
Birthless and deathless and changeless remaineth the
spirit for ever;
Death hath not touched it at all, dead though the
house of it seems!

Who knoweth it exhaustless, self-sustained,
Immortal, indestructible—shall such
Say, "I have killed a man, or caused to kill"?

Nay, but as when one layeth
His worn-out robes away,
And taking new ones, sayeth,
"These will I wear to-day!"
So putteth by the spirit
Lightly its garb of flesh,
And passeth to inherit
A residence afresh.

I say to thee weapons reach not the Life;
Flame burns it not, waters cannot o'erwhelm,
Nor dry winds wither it. Impenetrable,
Unentered, unassailed, unharmed, untouched,
Immortal, all-arriving, stable, sure,
Invisible, ineffable, by word
And thought uncompassed, ever all itself,
Thus is the Soul declared!

Bhagavad Gītā, trans. Edwin Arnold.

XVI

THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

THEN to the saddle lightly leaping, he
Touched the arched crest, and Kantaka sprang forth
With armed hoofs sparkling on the stones, and ring
Of champing bit; but none did hear that sound,
For that the Siddha Devas, gathering near,
Plucked the red mohra-flowers and strewed them thick
Under his tread, while hands invisible
Muffled the ringing bit and bridle-chains.
Moreover, it is written, when they came
Upon the pavement near the inner gates
The Yakshas of the air laid magic cloths
Under the stallion's feet, so that he went
Softly and still.
But when they reached the gate
Of triple brass—which hardly fivescore men
Served to unbar and open—lo ! the doors
Rolled back all silently, though one might hear
In day-time two koss off the thunderous roar
Of those grim hinges and unwieldy plates.

Also the middle and the outer gates
Unfolded each their monstrous portals thus
In silence, as Siddārtha and his steed
Drew near; while underneath their shadow lay,
Silent as dead men, all those chosen guards—
The lance and sword let fall, the shields unbraced,
Captain and soldiers—for there came a wind,
Drowsier than blows o'er Malwa's fields of sleep,
Before the Prince's path, which, being breathed,

Lulled every sense aswoon: and so he passed
Free from the palace.
When the morning star
Stood half a spear's length from the eastern rim,
And o'er the earth the breath of morning sighed,
Rippling Anoma's wave, the border-stream,
Then drew he rein, and leaped to earth, and kissed
White Kantaka betwixt the ears, and spake
Full sweet to Channa: " This which thou hast done
Shall bring thee good, and bring all creatures good:
Be sure I love thee always for thy love.
Lead back my horse, and take my crest-pearl here,
My princely robes, which henceforth stead me not,
My jewelled sword-belt and my sword, and these
The long locks by its bright edge severed thus
From off my brows. Give the King all, and say,
Siddartha prays forget him till he come
Ten times a Prince, with royal wisdom won
From lonely searchings and the strife for light;
Where, if I conquer, lo ! all earth is mine—
Mine by chief service !—tell him—mine by love !
Since there is hope for man only in man,
And none hath sought for this as I will seek,
Who cast away my world to save my world."

The Light of Asia, trans Edwin Arnold.

XVII

NIRVĀNA

MANY a House of Life
Hath held me—seeking ever him who wrought
These prisons of the senses, sorrow-fraught;
Sore was my ceaseless strife !

But now
Thou builder of the Tabernacle—Thou !
I know thee ! Never shalt Thou build again
These walls of pain
Nor raise the roof-tree of deceits, nor lay
Fresh rafters on the clay;
Broken this house is, and the ridge-pole split !
Delusion fashioned it !
Safe pass I hence, Deliverance to obtain.

The Light of Asia, trans. Edwin Arnold.

XVIII

THE CHURNING OF THE OCEAN

THE gods addressed the mighty Vishnu thus—
"Conquered in battle by the evil demons,
We fly to Thee for succour, Soul of all:
Pity and by Thy might deliver us."
Hari the Lord, Creator of the world,
Thus by the gods implored, all graciously
Replied: "Your strength shall be restored, ye gods;
Only accomplish what I now command;
Unite yourselves in peaceful combination
With these your foes; collect all plants and herbs
Of diverse kinds from every quarter; cast them
Into the sea of milk; take Mandara,
The mountain, for a churning-stick, and Vāsuki,
The serpent, for a rope; together churn
The ocean to produce the beverage—
Then reckon on my aid. I will take care
Your foes shall share your toil, but not partake
In its reward or drink th' immortal draught."
Thus by the god of gods advised, the host
United in alliance with the demons.
Straightway they gathered various herbs and cast them
Into the waters, then they took the mountain
To serve as churning-staff, and next the snake
To serve as cord, and in the ocean's midst
Hari himself, present in tortoise-form,
Became a pivot for the churning-staff.

Vishnu Purāna, trans M. Monier Williams.

XIX

EPIGRAMS FROM BHARTRIHARI

(i)

O FAIR Asoka-tree, with love's own red
Thy boughs are all aflame;
Whither, I pray thee, hath my wanton fled?
This way I know she came.

In vain thy nodding in the wind, thy sigh
Of ignorance assumed;
I know because my flower-love wandered by
For joy thy branches bloomed.

I know thee: ever with thy buds unblown,
Till touched by maiden's foot;
And though so fair—one fairest maid alone
Hath trod upon thy root.

(ii)

Fair is her body as a lonely river
Whereon the moonbeams quiver;
About her waist three furrows in a row,
Like circling billows go.

And there two swans their snowy plumage lave,
Soft riding on the wave;
There water-lilies nodding—'tis her brow,
A whiter flower.—O Thou

That shudderest in this sea of life to sink,
Beware that river-brink:
Lo, in the darkness, in the depths, there dwell
Monsters unnamable.

(iii)

Who hath escaped desire?
And thou, O King—what profit in thy wealth
When Time with creeping stealth
Has quenched thy youth and covered o'er love's fire

Nay, let us haunt the hall
Where loves for ever call,
And girls with full-blown eyes like lotus flowers
Look laughing into ours,
Ere age and withering palsies blight us all.

(iv)

My love within a forest walked alone,
All in a moonlit dale;
And here awhile she rested, weary grown,
And from her shoulders threw the crumpled veil
To court the little gale.

I, peering through the thicket, saw it all,
The yellow moonbeams fall,
I saw them, mirrored from her bosom, fly
Back to the moon on high.

(v)

Alas, my brother ! Mighty kings and lords,
Proud princes, courtiers, loveliest maidens gay,
Bards, and their tales of ancient chivalry,
Homage to Time ! All these have passed away.

Bhartrihari, *A Century of Indian Epigrams*, trans P E More.

XX

SONGS FROM SAKUNTALĀ

I. Spring Song

IN the dusk, as it falls
On the last golden hour,
The enamoured maiden
Takes a honeyed flower.

She holds it before her
In the dim room,
Before the mirror, burning
With her cheeks' bloom.

A flower the bees kiss,
Part and kiss, hovering near,
Its tendrils light as finger-tips
She twines about her ear.

II. " Where The Bee Sucks "

Bee, O Bee, that eagerly
Roamest after honey dew,
Thee the mango blossom drew,
Thee it held with honey-kiss—
Now it is the lotus holds thee
Lost in bliss.
Is the mango all forgot
For that flower that now unfolds thee,
Quite forgot ?

Trans Laurence Binyon.

XXI

THE CITY OF UJJAIN

SWERVE from thy northern path; for westward rise
The palace balconies thou may'st not slight
In fair Ujjain; and if bewitching eyes,
That flutter at thy gleams, should not delight
Thine amorous bosom, useless were thy gift of sight.

The neighbouring mountain-stream that gliding grants
A glimpse of charms in whirling eddies pursed,
While noisy swans accompany her dance
Like a tinkling zone, will slake thy loving thirst—
A woman always tells her love in gestures first.

Thou only, happy lover ! canst repair
The desolation that thine absence made:
Her shrinking current seems the careless hair
That brides deserted wear in single braid,
And dead leaves falling give her face a paler shade.

Oh, fair Ujjain ! Gem to Avantī given,
Where village ancients tell their tales of mirth
And old romance ! Oh, radiant glimpse of heaven,
Home of a blest celestial band whose worth
Sufficed, though fallen from heaven, to bring down heaven on earth.

Where the river-breeze at dawn, with fragrant gain
From friendly lotus-blossoms, lengthens out
The clear, sweet passion-warbling of the crane,
To cure the women's languishing, and flout
With a lover's coaxing all their hesitating doubt.

Enriched with odours through a window drifting
From perfumed hair, and greeted as a friend
By peacock pets their wings in dances lifting,
On flower-sweet balconies thy labour end,
Where prints of dear pink feet an added glory lend.

Black as the neck of Siva, very God,
Dear therefore to his hosts, thou mayest go
To his dread shrine, round which the gardens nod,
When breezes rich with lotus-pollen blow
And ointments that the gaily bathing maidens know.

Reaching that temple at another time,
Wait till the sun is lost to human eyes;
For if thou mayest play the part sublime
Of Siva's drum at evening sacrifice,
Then hast thou in thy thunders grave a priceless prize.

The women there, whose girdles long have tinkled
In answer to the dance, whose hands yet seize
And wave their fans with lustrous gems besprinkled,
Will feel thine early drops that soothe and please,
And recompense thee from black eyes like clustering
bees.

Clothing thyself in twilight's rose-red glory,
Embrace the dancing Siva's tree-like arm;
He will prefer thee to his mantle hoary,
And spare his grateful goddess-bride's alarm,
Whose eager gaze will manifest no fear of harm.

Kālīdāsa, *The Cloud Messenger*, trans A W Ryder.

XXII

SĪTĀ

'TIS Sītā: mark
How lovely, through her tresses dark
And floating loose, her face appears,
Though pale and wan, and wet with tears.
She moves along, like Tenderness
Invested with a mortal dress.

Bhavabhūti, *Rāma's Last Story*, trans. H. H. Wilson.

THE HERMIT'S DAUGHTER

THE flower unsmelled, the leaf unplucked of hand,
The gem unset, honeys that unsipped stand,
The undiminished fruit of well done duty;
Yea, even her stainless beauty:
Ah, what enjoyer shall these joys demand?

Kālīdāsa, *Sakuntalā*, trans Douglas Ainslie

XXIII

RĀDHĀ'S WEDDING SONG

HEAR'ST him not, my Rādhā ?
  Lo, night bendeth o'er thee—
Darker than dark Tamāla-leaves—
  To list thy marriage-song;
Dark as the touchstone that tries gold,
  And see now—on before thee—
Those lines of tender light that creep
  The clouded sky along:
O night ! that trieth gold of love,
  This love is proven perfect !
O lines that streak the touchstone sky,
  Flash forth true shining gold !
O rose-leaf feet, go boldly !
  O night !— that lovest lovers—
Thy softest robe of silence
  About these bridals fold !

See'st thou not, my Rādhā ?
  Lo, the night, thy bridesmaid,
Comes !—her eyes thick-painted
  With soorma of the gloom—
The night that binds the planet-worlds
  For jewels on her forehead,
And for emblem and for garland
  Loves the blue-black lotus-bloom;
The night that scents her breath so sweet
  With cool and musky odours,
That joys to spread her veil of shade
  Over the limbs of love;

And when, with loving weary,
  Yet dreaming love, they slumber.
Sets the far stars for silver lamps
  To light them from above.

Jayadeva, *Gītā Govinda*, trans. Edwin Arnold.

XXIV

TAMIL HYMNS

(i) The Pilgrim

UNBID to enter, darkling here I wait,
And shrilly plain my woe without the Gate
O tuin thine ear in pity, Master mine,
To hear the wail of this my shamed estate !

Dear Lord, no peer in misery have I,
No peer hast Thou in grace.
This binds us twain, and canst Thou then deny
To turn to me Thy face ?

Tamil poem, author unknown, trans. G U Pope

(ii) A Prayer For Release From Transmigration

Eternal Lord of Angels, who dost deign to veil Thy
form
In all Creation's varied state, to save poor souls,
Vouchsafe in all Thy grace to stay and hear Thy
servant's cry,
That we be saved the dire return to former wretched-
ness,
When we mistook the body for the soul, and sinned all
sins,
Which clung to us and fixed us evermore to mortal
frames.

Nammālvār, trans A. Govindāchārya.

XXV

POEMS BY KABĪR

(i) The Divine Flute Player

I HEAR the melody of His Flute, and I cannot
contain myself.
The flower blooms, though it is not spring, and
already the bee has received his invitation.
The sky roars and the lightning flashes; the waves rise
in my heart.
Where the rhythm of the world rises and falls, thither
my heart has reached;
There the hidden banners are fluttering in the air.
Kabir says: "My heart is dying, though it lives."

(ii) God is One

O Servant, where dost thou seek Me? Lo, I am
beside thee.
I am neither in temple nor in mosque, in Kaaba or
Kailāsa.
Neither am I in rites or ceremonies, in Yoga or
renunciation.
If thou art a true seeker, thou shalt at once find Me;
Thou shalt meet Me in a moment of time.
Saith Kabīr, "God is the breath of all breath, O
Sādhu."

Trans. Rabindranath Tagore

XXVI

VERSES FROM THE SIKH BIBLE
(Granth)

(i)

"MAKE Love thy mosque, Sincerity thy prayer-carpet, and Justice thy Quran;
Modesty thy circumcision, Courtesy thy Kaaba, Truth thy guru, Charity thy creed and prayer;
The will of God thy rosary, and God will preserve thine honour, O Nānak."

(ii)

Evil-mindedness is the low-caste woman, cruelty is the butcher's wife, a slanderous heart the sweeper woman, wrath the pariah woman.

What availeth it to have drawn lines round thy cooking-place, when these four sit ever with thee?

Make Truth, Self-Restraint, and Good Acts thy lines, and the utterance of the Name thine ablutions.

Nānak, in the next world he is best who walketh not in the way of sin.

(iii)

The Air is our Preceptor, the Water our Father, the Earth our Mother,
Day and Night our Nurses, who set the world a-playing.
Our good and evil deeds shall be read out in the presence of the Judge.
Those who have meditated on the Holy Name, and departed after their toil is completed,
Shall have their countenances made bright, O Nānak!

(iv)

In the House where God's praise is sung, and He is meditated on, sing the Sohila[1] and remember the Creator.

Sing the Sohila of my fearless Lord: I am a sacrifice to the song of joy by which everlasting comfort is obtained.

The year and the auspicious time for Marriage[2] are at hand. Meet me, my friends: anoint me with oil like a bride.

Pray, my friends, that I may meet my Lord. The message comes to every house: the invitation goeth forth every day.

Remember the voice of the Caller: Nānak, the Dawn is at hand !

(v)

In the beginning was the Real, in the beginning of the Ages was the Real.

The Real, O Nānāk, is, and the Real will be.

Trans. M. A Macauliffe.

[1] Funeral hymn.
[2] Death is the union of the Soul with God.

XXVII

THE DIVINE CHILD

WITH fingers locked in prayer she cries—
"How may I dare, O Lord God immortal, Thy boundless praise to tell?—
Far above the world's confusion and reason's vain intrusion, whom all the scriptures witness incomprehensible;
Whom saints and holy sages have hymned through all the ages, the fountain of compassion, the source of every grace;
Who aye with Lakshmī reignest, Thou, even Thou, now deignest to be my Son and succour thy sore-tried chosen race.
Though we know by revelation, heaven and earth and all creation, in each hair upon Thy body may be found,
In my arms Thou sweetly dreamest, O Mystery supremest, far beyond the comprehension of a sage the most profound."
Smiled the Lord at her devotion, and would fain have set in motion the magic that dazzles the crowd,
Telling all that He had done and the triumphs He had won, that his mother of her Son might be proud.
But hurriedly she cried,—"My soul is terrified by these marvels, disperse them from my sight;
Let me see Thee as a child, disporting free and wild, for in this is my greatest delight."
She spoke and he obeyed, and, at once in fashion made as an infant, began to cry.

Tulasī Dās, *Rāmcharit Mānas*, trans. F. S. Growse.

XXVIII

HYMNS FROM TUKĀRĀM

(i)

WHO guards the unborn babe within the
 womb?
How skilled His hands, Who guides and
 holds
This Universe! Who cherishes the little snake
That its unnatural mother would molest!
Who feeds the life within the dry cocoon,
And pulses in the living rock! Awake!
And firmly meet thy fate, saith Tukārām!

(ii)

As a bride looks back to her mother's house,
And goes, but with dragging feet,
So my soul looks up to Thee, and longs
That Thou and I may meet.
As a child cries out and is sore distressed,
When its mother it cannot see,
As a fish that is taken from out the wave,
So 'tis, says Tuka, with me.

Psalms of the Marāthā Saints, trans. N. MacNicol.

XXIX

THE DIVINE FAITH

O GOD, in every temple I see people that seek Thee: in every language I hear spoken, people praise Thee.

Polytheism and Islam feel after Thee: each says, Thou art One, without a second.

If it be a Mosque, men murmur the holy prayer: if it be a Church, they ring the bells from love of Thee.

Sometimes I frequent the cloister, sometimes the Mosque: but Thee I seek from Temple to Temple.

Thine elect have no dealings with heresy or orthodoxy: neither stand behind the screen of Thy Truth.

Heresy to the heretic, Orthodoxy to the orthodox. But the Rose-petal's dust belongs to the Perfume-seller's heart.

Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, trans H Blochmann.

XXX

JESUS, Son of Mary (on Whom be Peace) saith: The world is a bridge; pass over it, but build no house upon it. Who hopes for an hour, hopes for Eternity. The world is an hour. Spend it in prayer, for the Unseen is at hand.

Inscription on the Buland Darawāzā, Fathpur Sīkrī.

NOTES

Numbers I-IV The Vedas are the oldest extant works in any Indo-Aryan language. They originated while the Indo-Aryans were still moving across the head-waters of the Indus and its tributaries on their way to their later home in the Gangetic plain. These hymns were composed by the family bards of the great clans, and were afterwards looked on as the foundation of the Hindu religion.

V-VIII. The Upanishads were treatises on the subject of the Supreme Soul or Ātman, compiled by the Brahmin priests for the purpose of instructing their pupils. The Ātman is the One Divine Reality behind all phenomena, and the world is worthless and unreal. Transmigration and *karma* are the only explanation of the miseries of life, from which Release can be obtained by the extinction of desire through austerity and penance.

IX-XII. The two great Indian epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyana*, are founded on the adventures of the Indo-Aryan clans when they left the Indus valley and reached the Gangetic plain. The *Mahābhārata* is the story of the great battle between the Pāndavas and the Kauravas for the throne of Indraprastha Finally, the Pāndava brothers, with their co-wife Draupadī and their faithful dog, abandon their royal state and set out for Mount Meru, the Indian Olympus No. XI is part of the answer given by the sage Vyāsa to the question "What is Death?" asked by the parents of the young prince Abhymanyu, who is killed in battle In the *Rāmāyana* are recounted the adventures of Rāma and his faithful wife Sītā, who was abducted by the demon king Ravana, but was rescued by Rāma and his brother Lakshmana, with the help of Hanuman and his monkeys.

XIII-XV. From the *Bhagavad Gītā*, originally an episode of the *Mahābhārata*, in which Krishna, the Divine Charioteer of Prince Arjuna, reveals to him the secrets of Life, Death and Immortality.

XVI-XVII. Two selections from the *Light of Asia*, the story of the life of Gautama Buddha, by Edwin Arnold. The first deals with the Great Renunciation, when Gautama abandoned wife and child and palace, and rode out to find the Truth, the second is his pæan, uttered when he attains Buddhahood, seated beneath the pipal tree at Bodh Gayā. They are taken from two metrical lives of the Buddha, the *Lalita Vistara* and the *Buddha Charita.*

XVIII The *Purānas*, or Old Stories, are the Bible of popular Hinduism. This is the legend of the creation of the world through the Churning of the Ocean by the gods and demons.

XIX. Free translations of some epigrams from the *Sataka* or Century of Verse of Bhartrihari, the Indian Horace—poet, courtier, recluse and cynic—who probably lived at the court of King Harsha of Kanauj (A D. 606-647).

XX-XXI From the works of Kālidāsa, poet and dramatist of the Gupta age, probably about A D 450. The *Sakuntalā*, or Lost Ring, is the greatest of all Indian dramas. The *Cloud Messenger* is a lyric poem, the lament of a yaksha or spirit banished by the god Kubera. He sends a message home to his wife by a passing cloud, and describes his beloved city of Ujjain, over which it must pass on its journey to the Himālayas

XXII. From the *Uttara Rama Charita*, or Last Story of Rāma, by the dramatist Bhavabhūti

XXIII. From the *Gītā Govinda*, or Indian Song of Songs, of Jayadeva, the Bengali poet (*c.* A D. 1100). This erotic poem or dramatic dialogue celebrates the love of Krishna for the Gopīs or milkmaids, and especially his beloved Rādhā. It is an allegory of the love of God for the human soul.

XXIV. Hymns of the Ālvārs or wandering friars of Southern India. Dravidian India had an extensive devotional literature all its own, both in Tamil and Sanskrit

XXV Kabīr, who died in 1518, was a Muhammadan weaver. Like Nānak, the founder of the Sikh sect, and Tulsī Dās, he was a follower of the great teacher Rāmānanda, the chief exponent of the *Bhakti* or devotional movement in Northern India. To them, Hinduism and Islam were one, a doctrine afterwards preached by the emperor Akbar (Nos XXIX-XXX). " God is One, whether we worship Him as Allah or Rāma The Hindu God lives at Benares, the Muhammadan God at Mecca; but He Who created the world dwells not in a temple made by hands."

XXVI. The founder of the reformed sect of the Sikh or Disciples was Nānak (A.D. 1469-1538). Nānak forbade idolatry and abolished the caste system among his followers The Granth or Sikh Bible contains the teachings of the Gurus or spiritual leaders of the Sikhs, and was compiled by Gobind, the tenth and last Guru, in A.D. 1696.

XXVII. The *Rāmcharit Mānas*, or Ocean of the Deeds of Rāma, composed by Tulsī Dās (A.D. 1532-1623), is, perhaps, the most widely known work in the Hindi language. It has been described as containing "some of the most beautiful poetry that has found birth in Asia." This striking passage, describing the Divine Infant lying on the knees of His mother Kausalyā, suggests an obvious Christian parallel.

XXVIII. Tukārām (A.D. 1608-1649), the friend and preceptor of the hero Sivājī, is the most popular of the Marāthā poet-saints, and his verses are on the lips of every peasant in the Deccan today. He was a devotee of the god Vithoba, whose shrine is at Pandharpur, and dwelt at the little village of Dehu, near Poona.

XXIX-XXX. The great emperor Akbar (A.D. 1555-1605) tried to unite India's many creeds in an eclectic religion (*Din Ilāhī* or Divine Faith). In this he was aided by his faithful courtier Abul Fazl.

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